

The Daily Helping Episode 309:

Jake Kauffman

**Jake Kauffman:** So, every hero needs a guide. We all have to have a person in our life that is capable of, not just pointing out our blind spots and revealing pain to us, but helping us reconcile that pain.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** Hello and welcome to The Daily Helping with Dr. Richard Shuster, food for the brain, knowledge from the experts, tools to win at life. I'm your host, Dr. Richard. Whoever you are, wherever you're from, and whatever you do, this is the show that is going to help you become the best version of yourself. Each episode you will hear from some of the most amazing, talented, and successful people on the planet who followed their passions and strived to help others. Join our movement to get a million people each day to commit acts of kindness for others. Together, we're going to make the world a better place. Are you ready? Because it's time for your Daily Helping.

Thanks for tuning in to this episode of The Daily Helping Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Richard. And we have an awesome and inspiring guest to share with you today. His name is Jake Kauffman. He is an inspirational, spiritual mentor, life coach, and international bestselling author. He helps people live a purpose driven life. He works with entrepreneurs who are seeking to grow in their life and their leadership. His mission is to help men radically heal and transform so that they can achieve their full potential and purpose. He's here to talk about his newest book, which is now available everywhere, Let Love In. Jake, welcome to The Daily Helping. It is awesome to have you with us today.

**Jake Kauffman:** Dr. Richard, thank you so much for having me. It's awesome to be here.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** I'm really glad that you are. I'm excited to dig into your book. I just want to get right into it, let's jump in the Jake Kauffman time machine and tell us kind of the origins of your superhero story here.

**Jake Kauffman:** My superhero story, I love it. Well, I don't know if I would call it a superhero story, but I'm happy to dive in. So, as far as I'm concerned, I grew up in a very, very small town in Michigan, just like yourself. And, unfortunately, very early on experienced a good amount of physical abuse, which kind of highlighted, if you will, or

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the catalyzing moment in all of that was when I experienced sexual abuse right around the age of 12 or 13, this acute incident when I was at summer camp. And it was unique because it happened in front of all of my friends, all the guys that I grew up with, same church, same town, same school that I grew up in, happened in front of everyone and none of them tried to stop it.

So, as you can probably imagine, it was significantly painful, not just because of what happened, but because of what didn't happen. Because no one interceded. No one tried to protect me. And to make a long story short, in that moment, because at 12 or 13, what do you do with that amount of pain? Most young kids, young adolescents have no idea how to process or internalize that amount of pain.

And it ultimately caused me to start wearing a series of masks in order to self-protect as compensating strategies in an attempt to avoid that pain, that sadness, that humiliation, the bitterness, the anger, the resentment, all of the things attached, all the emotions attached to that experience I needed to avoid because it was just too painful. And so, I started to wear a series of masks, like most people do, like we all on some level unconsciously do when we're really young, in an attempt to be loved and accepted by mom and dad, admired by our peers, and eventually later in life to become successful in business and in career.

So, what I did was I resorted to acting as if I had it all together. I was fine. I was successful. So, I became a three-sport athlete in high school, excelled in academics not just through high school, but also through college, and eventually went on to create a very successful corporate career. I started a healthcare startup in early 2000 with a couple of other guys. That company is now over 400 people and is one of the largest healthcare technology SaaS companies in the entire country.

And yet, all of that was an adaptation or an overcompensation to avoid dealing with my pain. So, I became this hyper vigilant doer that was very focused on success, work, achievement, accolades, image status, reputation in an attempt to outrun my pain. So, no matter what level of success I found myself at, on some deep internal level, I was incredibly unhappy, unfulfilled, and anxious.

And it wasn't until I started noticing the patterns that I was creating in my life, sabotaging

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my success, unconsciously pushing away love and intimacy in romantic relationship, and also doing this with my friends and family members. I would only let people in so much to a certain degree before that amount of love, connection, or intimacy exceeded, what is referred to as my window of tolerance, what felt safe to me. So, of course, I had to push it away at that point.

And it wasn't until I was like, "Oh, wow. I'm doing this. This is a pattern." And I didn't have language for it at the time. But what I would tell my clients now is the pattern always reveals the problem. And so, it forced me to take a deeper look and do some interpersonal work.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** You know, there's a few things that are interesting here. And before I even get into it, I want to honor you for being vulnerable and sharing this, much less writing a book about it. I've often posited that the type of people who achieve fanatically for the sake of achievement, not because they're passionate about something, that's their mission in life, but because they just have to move. It's almost like going on a checklist, like one grand victory to the next. I've always felt that those people are wildly overcompensating for something that they really don't want to acknowledge. And you articulated that so well.

I am curious, you said that you started seeing these patterns. Because this went on for many, many years, so was this the sort of thing where there was like a huge event happened? You know, the end of a relationship, or the loss of a job, or was it just kind of needling at you a little bit over time until you start having more and more awareness to this pattern?

**Jake Kauffman:** It was a little bit of both. There wasn't really this cataclysmic incident that caused me to wake up necessarily. I think death by a thousand cuts would be more appropriate. But suffice to say, I woke up when I was 29 years old. I was serving tables in a restaurant in Chicago. And I had gotten drunk from the night before and I was supposed to go home to Michigan for Mother's Day. My parents lived about an hour away from where I lived in Chicago at the time. And I called to tell my mom that I wasn't going to be coming.

And I'll never forget what she said to me at the time. She said, "Jake, I don't even know

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who you are anymore." And it was that simple statement. She wasn't even that mad at me, but it was that simple statement that that caused me to really take a hard look in the mirror and ask myself, What's going on? Like, I'm starting to notice these behavior patterns. What's driving that behavior? Because I'm clearly sabotaging, clearly pushing people away. Even though that's not my conscious intention, that's the result.

So, what's going on? What's driving these patterns? What's motivating this behavior? Because until I figure that out, and I don't know that I ever articulated this, it was more of this internal knowing that said, this is just going to continue if I don't figure this out.

And right around that time I started meeting with a therapist and I said, "You know, I'm noticing that I am pushing away love and intimacy connection. And I'm really struggling, establishing a deeper connection with people, not just, again, in romantic relationships, but friends, family members." He's like, "Well, what do you think that's about?" It's like, "I don't know."

And so, we started talking about events in my childhood, and I told him about this incident at summer camp, but I just kind of skipped over it. And I'll never forget the look on his face that said, "Oh." "That was abuse, wasn't it?" And he was like, "Yeah." Because how I dealt with it was by not dealing with it. And a part of that was not acknowledging the event for what it actually was. And so, the moment I identified it for what it actually was, then, of course, I was forced to deal with the pain of it and how I was recycling that pain from the past into the present moment.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** When all of this, when you were going through therapy and you were having these - we'll call them - awakenings, because really, you know, the therapist, it was pretty clear to that guy what was going on. And now, all of a sudden, you're starting to take ownership of that. Talk us through once you started accepting and confronting that incident at summer camp, what kind of changes did you start seeing in your life?

**Jake Kauffman:** As you can imagine, it happened slowly, however gradually. But I noticed myself opening up. The more I worked on myself, worked through this pain, healed, the more opportunity, the more financial abundance, the better relationships I attracted into my life and the better my existing relationships got. And so, I was like,

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"Okay. There's something to this." Like, the emotions that I'm just now starting to process from this terrible thing that happened to me 20 years ago now, the more I process through these emotions and feel them, I'm transcending them.

And as a result, as a byproduct of that work, I'm starting to experience all of these external benefits, of course, like I mentioned, but all of these internal benefits. I'm now starting to feel much more at peace with who I am. I'm starting to access a greater level of confidence because I agree with you when you talked about, you know, these hypervigilant doers that just simply push, push, push, push, push. And in my experience, what's behind that is this unconscious attempt to claim victory over a fundamental lack of self-worth. That's what I was doing.

Because as you can imagine, the abuse shattered my confidence and it also shattered my trust in other people, which rendered me very incapable of achieving deeper levels of connection, love, and intimacy. And so, the more I started to do this work, external benefits and internal benefits just started to happen and occur. And I started to experience a greater level of internal peace, self-confidence, and fulfillment.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** So, let's talk about Let Love In.

**Jake Kauffman:** Let's do it.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** Was there a moment for you when you felt like, "Man, I've got to tell this story" or "If I tell it, it's going to help a lot of people," why did you decide to actually write this and go public with something that most people don't want to talk about?

**Jake Kauffman:** Totally. Well, I would say that I think it's Charles Dickens who says that your calling is your curse. It's the thing that you can't not do. And in many ways, this book for me is that. So, a little bit more backstory. After three, four years, I shared about my story on social media for the first time in early 2019. So, at that point I had spent the previous three, four years lots of healing work, therapy, going to different workshops and seminars, and diving deep into my pain.

Early 2019, I said, "You know what? I think a lot of people are going to benefit from

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hearing my story." I had started my coaching business the year prior, and I started to realize there are a lot of people who have gone through some type of acute trauma, abuse, assault. They just haven't told anyone about it. But in our coaching together, it naturally eventually came up. So, I'm like, "I bet that people could really benefit from hearing my story, that it could serve as inspiration to others to go on their own healing journey." And so, I shared it on social media.

And as a result of sharing it on social media, my entire nervous system collapsed. And I suffered from what is clinically referred to as an acute nervous system breakdown. The amount of connection that posting my story on social media created was so overwhelming to my nervous system that I basically had a panic attack on steroids. The amount of input was too much. It was too much, too soon, too fast.

Because as you can imagine, now, this shameful secret that I've maintained for 20 years that, sure, some people know about, like my therapist and my best friend and my parents, but not everyone in my entire world. Now, they all know about it and everyone is messaging me, including strangers that I don't even know but that saw my post because it was public. And now I'm getting messages and all of these phone calls from people who I know, who I don't know, friends, family members, coworkers, clients, strangers telling me about their stories, their experiences with abuse, the trauma that they've gone through, telling me how much my story inspired them. And it was just too much, too soon, too fast, and my nervous system collapsed. It couldn't handle it.

So, I started to journal at the encouragement of my therapist to process what was coming up for me. Because it essentially revealed this whole other layer of grieving that I didn't even know was there, this whole other level of pain that I didn't even know was there that caused me to fear other people's opinions and judgment. All the masks that I had unconsciously taken on and worn and reinforced for 10, 20 years were ripped away. I could no longer act as if and play this part or this role that allowed me to hide from other people.

And so, I started to journal and it just came pouring out of me. It came flooding out of me. And probably two, four weeks later, I was like, "I think this could really help people what I'm processing, what I'm working through because I'm also doing it as a coach, as

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someone who helps people in their own healing." And so, four years later, here we are and we have a book.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** Four years later, here we are and we have a book. Some of the things that you just kind of said in passing, and I know you didn't mean to trivialize, I mean, you didn't, but, you know, you said therapy and workshops and self-healing, so I presume the book to some degree has guideposts as to how to get through your own work and journey, how to kind of process this.

So, you know, the thing about trauma is very interesting. Some people just presume trauma means somebody has been raped or somebody has been shot at or a helicopter crashed in their backyard. Trauma is relative to the person. And I think that's the biggest misconception about trauma that's out there, is that trauma doesn't just mean that a grenade was lobbed by you and blew up. Trauma is very personal.

And so, most of us are walking around having some degree of unresolved trauma and that sits on a spectrum. You know, there's one thing from hearing a car backfire and thinking it's somebody shooting at you versus being assaulted. So, there's different degrees of this. But if somebody is listening to this and they're kind of nodding along, "Yeah. I think something maybe happened to me or certainly happened to somebody that I know," what are some of the things that they can do right now above and beyond going to seek mental health professionals who can help them, because that's critical?

**Jake Kauffman:** That's a really good question. And I want to start by piggybacking off of what you said, because in the work that you do or did in the past with your clients, Gabor Maté, the psychotherapist, is really starting to lend a lot of beautiful insight to trauma and addiction. And what he says is that trauma is much less about what happened, and it's much more about how we internalize it.

In other words, the stories that we made up as a result or the beliefs that we adopted about ourselves, other people as a result. So, even if you haven't suffered a big T trauma, as they would call, abuse, assault, something like that, an attack, that doesn't mean that you aren't carrying around these limiting stories or limiting beliefs that hold you back from achieving your goals in life.

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Not to be cliché, but the only thing that stands between you and the life that you've always wanted is resistance. Well, why is that resistance there? It's because of these beliefs and these stories that stem from painful experiences even if it wasn't this big T trauma, it was more little T trauma, emotional trauma.

And so, I think what people can do is really start to analyze their behavior. Because your results paint a perfect picture of what you believe about yourself. So, if you have a ton of success, like we talked about earlier, you've achieved a lot in life, but you are still internally feeling incredibly empty, unhappy, unfulfilled, anxious, in my experience, 99 times out of 100, that's because you have some level of unresolved pain from the past or unfinished hurt that you're just continuing to carry around. You're doing what I did. You're performing your way around the pain. So, no matter how much you achieve, the pain is still there. You're still left to confront that pain at every next level.

So, I think starting to analyze your behavior, your results is a very, very important place to start because the pattern always reveals the problem. There's the conscious desire, but then there's the unconscious motivation beneath it. Most people are asking themselves, What do I want? They're not asking, Why do I want it? So, starting to ask yourself that deeper question is going to force you to do a deeper level of self-reflection, which is going to reveal different and new answers.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** I like this. What's next? What do we do then?

**Jake Kauffman:** Every hero needs a guide, whether it's a therapist, whether it's a coach, whether it's a spiritual guidance counselor, whatever that is for you. The number one goal of the ego - and by ego, I mean the false self - is to maintain the status quo. And the only way that it can do that is to hide the truth from you.

That is to say, we all have blind spots. We need someone to help us point out those blind spots in the same way that I needed my therapist to come along and say, "Have you ever thought more about that incident, that experience, and what that was? I was like, "Not really." And he was like, "So, tell me what happened again?" And it was the second time through explaining what happened exactly and the look on his face, him mirroring back to me, discussed just being disturbed by what I was telling him, that I was like, "Oh, that was more than just a joke."



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So, I needed that person to come alongside me to point out what my ego is trying to hide from me, which was the fact that this was a traumatic experience for you that created this host of limiting beliefs and stories that you are just continuing to recycle in the present moment because you haven't reconciled the pain that it produced and it's causing you to sabotage in your life. Even though you've created success, on the side you find yourself pushing away love and intimacy and connection with other people. You find yourself not being fulfilled with the success that you've created.

So, every hero needs a guide. We all have to have a person in our life that is capable of not just pointing out our blind spots and revealing pain to us, but helping us reconcile that pain.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** The book is called Let Love In, and we've talked a lot about the introspection, the guide, every hero needs a guide. But we haven't talked about letting love in. So, let's talk about it.

**Jake Kauffman:** Yeah. Well, like I mentioned earlier on the podcast, we all have a threshold of what we feel safe to receive. That isn't just isolated to love, connection, and intimacy. That also includes financial abundance, opportunity. And we see this play out.

We see this play out with lottery winners. If you're familiar with the statistics around lottery winners, over 70 percent of them go broke after only 18 months because the results, in this case, the money, forester passes their window of tolerance, their threshold of safety. And so, what do they have to do in that moment? They have to self-sabotage, which is another way to just say they have to self-protect. And so, what do they do? They start spending the money frivolously to get rid of it, to return to homeostasis, which is just to return to a baseline level of comfort and familiarity.

We do the exact same thing in relationship when it comes to love and intimacy. And so, the more we work through our pain, the more we seek to expand what feels safe in our bodies to receive. The more we can let into that space, the more love we can receive.

And I think I can speak for everyone listening to this podcast, that's what we all want. We all desire more peace, more love, more connection, more intimacy. But how do we

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create that? We have to create the space for it first because we all have a capacity. So, we have to increase our capacity. And the moment we let go of the pain from the past, then we create space for something new to fill it.

So, paradoxically speaking, I'm a coach and I have people come to me all the time asking me, "Jake, how do I make more money or how do I achieve impossible goals?" And I say, "Well, first and foremost, before we talk about how you can go about accomplishing those things, we have to talk about what is preventing you from accomplishing those things in the first place."

We've got some cleaning up to do. Paradoxically, the way forward is the way back. The way up is the way down. That's how it always works. If you want to grow the muscle, what do you have to do first? You have to tear it. The same thing is true for us internally, emotionally, when it comes to allowing a greater degree of love and intimacy into our lives.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** I love how simplistic you're taking very complex topics and really breaking them down, boiling them down, if you will, to something just so basic that makes just so much sense. So, this is outstanding.

Jake, our time together has flown by, and I've loved listening to you talk and sharing your wisdom with us. As you know, I wrap up every episode by asking my guests a single question, and that is, what is your biggest helping? That one most important piece of information you'd like somebody to walk away with after hearing our conversation today.

**Jake Kauffman:** I think that would be to contemplate a question, and that question is this, If my greatest strength is a compensating strategy, what is my greatest strength for?

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** I'll let everybody ponder on that. That is fantastic. Jake, tell us where people can learn more about you online and get their hands on Let Love In, which is now available everywhere.

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**Jake Kauffman:** Absolutely. Best place to interact with me, connect with me, get updates about me and my work is on Instagram, which is @iamjakekauffman, so K-A-U-F-F-M-A-N. Otherwise, you can also go to my website, which is my full name, jacobkauffman.com.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** Perfect. And we'll have everything Jake Kauffman in the show notes at thedailyhelping.com. Well, Jake, thank you so much for joining us today and sharing your stories and experiences with us. I know they're going to help a lot of people.

**Jake Kauffman:** Dr. Richard, thank you so much again for having me. It was great to be here.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** Absolutely. And I also want to take a moment to thank each and every one of you who took time out of your day to listen to this conversation. If you liked it, if you found it helpful, go give us a follow on Apple Podcasts and leave us a five star review, because that is what helps other people find the show. But most importantly, go out there today and do something nice for somebody else, even if you don't know who they are, and post it on your social media feeds using the hashtag #MyDailyHelping, because the happiest people are those that help others.